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SUBJECT: UNHCR: REFUGEE WOMEN AND PROJECT PROFILE

REF: A. GENEVA 01605

B. GENEVA 01689

1. (U) SUMMARY: The Executive Committee (ExCom) of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) held a meeting of its "Standing Committee" June 28-30 to discuss budget and program matters. This cable focuses on the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women, Project Profile, and other news from the June meeting. Others will focus on budget matters and protection issues. UNHCR presented papers on refugee women and on Project Profile which generated lively debate. END SUMMARY.

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REPORT ON HC'S FIVE COMMITMENTS TO REFUGEE WOMEN  
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2. (U) Marjon Kamara, Director of the Division of Operational Support at UNHCR, briefed member states on the implementation status of each of the five commitments, based on information provided by field offices in their Standards and Indicators reports. The five commitments are supported by the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy, which has structured refugee participation at its core. Delegations raised concern over the poor, late or lack of reporting of some field offices and thus questioned the accuracy of the resulting reports.

3. (U) With regard to Commitment 1 on women's participation, Kamara described the increase on average in women's membership in management committees, although gender parity in both leadership positions and power in decision-making processes has not been achieved in most camps. Kamara noted that in order to strengthen their leadership skills and literacy, women must work with men in a participatory decision-making process. During the next two years, UNHCR, in collaboration with partners, will focus on continuing the development and adaptation of information packs and training modules to promote the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Several delegations, including USdel, highlighted the need for UNHCR and its partners to play a proactive role in this process by insisting on speaking to women on the committees and getting their views. Kamara insisted this was occurring in focus groups in which refugee women are asked about their proposals for solutions.

4. (U) UNHCR expects Commitment 2, which calls for the individual registration of women and men, to be fulfilled progressively as Project Profile is expanded to all country operations. For more information about Project Profile, see the next section.

5. (U) With regard to Commitment 3, the development of integrated, country-level strategies to address sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV), Kamara noted an average of 86 per cent follow-up to all identified cases among refugee women. Kamara acknowledged that systemic problems existed regarding exposure to SGBV and exploitation due to inadequate assistance and the refugees' reliance on local justice systems. UNHCR's focus is now on the expansion of the pool of trainers to provide country-level training, establishment of standard operating procedures and strengthening of community-based prevention campaigns and responses. The Canadian delegation raised concern that 17 per cent of SGBV victims were not supported, but Kamara stated that regional bureaus have gone back to the regions to understand the reason and causes. In response to other questions, Kamara also noted a "strengthening of synergy" between work on gender and HIV/AIDS. In addition, Kamara stated that UNHCR is incorporating the Five Priorities for Refugee Children into its work, and that where UNHCR does have responsibility for IDPs, the organization tries to pursue the same policies with respect to SGBV.

6. (U) Kamara noted that UNHCR is doing the best in fulfilling Commitment 4, relating to refugee women's participation in the management and distribution of food. Most reports show an average of 45 per cent or above in women's participation in distribution.

7. (U) According to Kamara, Commitment 5, the provision of sanitary materials, presents an enormous challenge and remains &shamefully low8 in terms of progress. Field offices report that resource limitations constrain their

ability to meet even life-saving needs, and this affects the provision of non-food items as well, including sanitary materials. UNHCR hopes that continuing dialogue with refugee women will help to identify culturally sensitive and effective methods to fulfill this commitment. Delegations showed the most concern over the lack of progress in fulfilling this commitment, and several delegates called for increased accountability, awareness, and commitment to the goals. Kamara noted the common concern with Commitment 5, but responded that UNHCR has a specific budget-line with regard to sanitary materials. Nevertheless, the U.S. delegation maintained that it was unacceptable that operations are forced to prioritize funding and are unable to distribute 100 per cent of needed sanitary kits. USdel insisted that donors should not be forced to earmark funding in order to ensure compliance with UNHCR's own standards.

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PROJECT PROFILE  
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18. (U) Kamara also updated member states on Project Profile, the global program to improve standards and methodologies in order to provide better registration. DOS has integrated 95 new databases into this new system. Over 2 million refugees and persons of concern have been recorded and registered, and of those, 1 million people have photographs. UNHCR has provided 28 operations with joint support in this area.

19. (U) In response to member state concerns, Kamara acknowledged that capacity is often limited in UNHCR field offices. Eleven operations have required UNHCR to contract short-term expert consultations. However, Kamara noted that UNHCR would try to maintain staffing requirements by focusing on sustainability and process mainstreaming. In this effort, UNHCR will strengthen its IT section in order to retain capacity to oversee Project Profile and other IT components in the field. UNHCR will also mainstream registration for Project Profile in order to ensure sustainability.

110. (U) UNHCR has partnered with both NGOs and government entities to implement its information campaign on registration. These efforts include information-sharing with refugees, but extend to monitoring assistance and verification exercises to ensure that registration involves the refugees themselves. UNHCR will also improve its documentation as it plans to receive more detailed, disaggregated data on populations. According to Kamara, UNHCR also welcomes biometrics support from the Netherlands because of continuing problems associated with recycling and multiple registrations. However, many delegations raised concern over confidentiality issues related to such data collection and use.

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OTHER UNHCR NEWS  
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11. (U) The 2004 Global Report was presented at the beginning of the session to general praise. UNHCR is trying to cut down separate bilateral donor reporting requirements by incorporating the necessary information in the report. Most concerns were reactions from nations who took offense to UNHCR characterizations of their own regional or national situations. USdel informed UNHCR about the need for standardized country profiles and an increased focus on gender and community issues in future reports.

112. (U) An interim report on protection will be conducted five years after the adoption of The Agenda for Protection, with many delegations calling for a standard format or questionnaire. Other delegations suggested that member states and UNHCR draft jointly an update to the agenda.

113. (U) UNHCR will focus its annual oral update to ECOSOC on cooperation within and outside the United Nations system, concentrating on its agreements with other UN agencies and collaboration with NGOs/private sector organizations.

114. (U) At the end of the Standing Committee meeting, Ecuadorian Ambassador Hernan Escudero Martinez Chairman of the Executive Committee, stepped down as he is leaving Geneva. Ambassador Juan Antonio Martibit of Chile was nominated for the chairmanship by the Colombian delegation and confirmed by acclamation.  
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